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ABSTRACT

Staff development programs and activities are common methods of stimulating change in the behavior of educators. These programs may be designed for a number of purposes, including (1) problem-solving within the local school or district; (2) remediation to develop work-related skills; (3) motivation to change and improve staff; and (4) development of upward professional mobility. Professional associations in favor of staff development programs include the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. Among the methods of program delivery are visitations, peer counseling, model teaching, workshop development and presentations, service on educational committees, and college courses. Peer support for change in practice influences the success of professional development programs. Program administrators can significantly enhance staff growth by proactive planning rather than a reactive problem identification and solution. A six-page reference list is included. (MLF)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Training activities for educators through a local staff development program have become common practice in school districts (Baden, 1979). The heavy reliance upon teachers to deliver a quality educational program gives staff development or inservice education "both its importance and its urgency" (Harris, 1980, p. 13). As demands for educational reform have increased, new programs have been implemented that require new knowledge, skills, and attitudes on the part of current school staff (Brown & Scribner, 1982; Houston, 1987). These new programs further emphasize the need for an effective staff development program.

Innovations and new ideas are inculcated regularly into a school district when a board of education annually employs new certified personnel. With reduced educator turnover, this source of new ideas has been greatly diminished (Arends, Hersh, & Turner, 1978; Berman & Friederwitzer, 1981; Brown & Scribner, 1982). Another major source of new ideas has traditionally been graduate education where current ideas and practices are channeled into classrooms. However with more educators holding advanced degrees, this

source may also be reduced (Baden, 1979). It is likely that staff development activities will remain a common method of stimulating changes in the behavior of educators.

Staff Development

Dale (1983) described a staff development program as a means of providing improvement that draws upon "the totality of educational and personal experiences that contribute towards an individual's being more competent and satisfied in an assigned professional role" (p. 31). Staff development involves improving skills, implementing curricular procedures, expanding subject matter knowledge, planning and organizing instruction, and increasing personnel effectiveness (Dale, 1983; Solo, 1985).

According to Roth (1980), staff development is a process for extending or continuing the professional development of educators. It is an organizationally planned program for providing educational personnel, usually teachers, with the competencies--knowledge and skills--needed to promote effective instruction, that is, to facilitate learning and growth of students (Evertson, 1986; Roth, 1980). A staff development program should focus on the problems of people throughout the organization and should consider the "psychological needs of the staff" (Thompson & Cooley, 1984, p. 4). A staff development program

> is based upon staff members' previous learning and job experiences, and organizational needs, mission, and

> goals. The content of a staff development program is determined to a great extent by the social and economic needs of the organization. Thus training, education, and development efforts are generally continuous until job termination. (Miller & Verduin, 1979, p. 4)

A staff development program consists of all experiences that are provided by the school or recognized by the school as being important for and contributing to the personal and professional growth of employees of the school (Fortenberry, 1985; Johnston, Adams, & Nudson, 1976; Kelley & Dillon, 1978; Menacker, Hurwitz, & Weldon, 1986). More commonly, a staff development program is defined as including all those activities that help employees do their work better and gain greater satisfaction. Inservice activities are recognized as being important when they are judged as contributing to changes in the behavior of staff members or to increases in students' achievements attributable to experiences of staff members in an inservice activity (Arends, Hersh, & Turner, 1980; Fenstermacher & Berliner, 1985; Mertz, 1983 ; Nielson & Turner, 1985).

Elfenbein (1978) provided definitions of a staff development program and a staff development activity. She defined a "staff development program" as "all the activities, courses, offerings, and experiences that enable the practitioner to improve professionally and includes the theoretical as well as the practical" (p. 8). She defined a "staff development activity" as

> a hands-on experience which is directly related to the realities of the classroom as the teachers confront them daily. It provides answers to current questions, provides information about new materials and trends, and facilitates the development of skills to implement the programs and/or materials. (p. 8)

Purposes

Staff development programs may be designed to allow participants to gain skills and knowledge necessary to solve problems identified within the local school or school district, while those intended for remediation help develop necessary work-related skills not gained through previous training or education (Cook, 1985; Florio & Koff, 1977; Howey & Joyce, 1978; Santelli, 1978). Motivational staff development programs are designed to provide skills and inspiration to change or improve, and upward professional mobility staff development programs are designed to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills which would allow teachers to seek employment with higher pay and increased status or to change locations (Florio & Koff, 1977; Korinek, Schmid, & McAdams, 1985). Another purpose of staff development may be to allow participants to acquire additional education or training as a condition of employment or certification (Howey & Joyce, 1978; Santelli, 1978).

Inservice education promotes the development of individual staff members by encouraging them to keep abreast

of new methods, materials, and technology (Evertson, 1986; Howey, 1985; Menacker et al., 1986; Smith, 1985; Wiles, 1967). Organized groups, looking at American schools, have placed better teaching "close to the heart of school improvement--better teaching is the result of better individual teachers" (Buchanan & Bachelor, 1983, p. 16). If student achievement is to be improved, teachers should have inservice training (Thompson & Cooley, 1984, p. 4).

Goldsberry and Harvey (1985) stated that a staff development program should contribute directly to teachers' performance of their craft and should also facilitate adult development of teachers as individuals (p. 37). Teachers who benefit from an inservice activity are more likely to inspire their students with genuine enthusiasm for learning and more likely to provide supportive learning environments (Goldsberry & Harvey, 1985).

Staff development programs should promote and foster collective action among teachers to enhance school effectiveness (Goldsberry & Harvey, 1985, p. 37). Helping teachers grow professionally is an important purpose of staff development programs because teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and pedagogical skills significantly influence the way they teach (Guskey, 1985; Hawthorne, 1983). Because professional educators must base their decisions on a well-developed body of knowledge and cumulative experience, another major purpose of inservice education programs is attending to the developmental needs of each teacher (Howey,

1985). Considering each teacher as a vital member of the educational organization facilitates effective staff development programs (Hawthorne, 1983).

Educator growth and school change are interdependent. Each occurs "most effectively and lastingly in a situation that supports and encourages the other" (Brown, 1978, p. 1). Cooper (1977) stated that staff development "assimilates change, confronts the day to day crisis which is the classroom, juvenates the forgotten, creates the never learned, systematizes coping, reduces groping" (p. 1).

The education prospective teachers receive in a four-year degree program is designed to provide them with the requisite but minimal qualifications for entering the profession (Roth, 1980). Educators frequently express concern about their professional renewal (Brown & Scribner, 1982) and have a continual need to strengthen their professional knowledge and skills (Roth, 1980). Staff development is considered to be a complex but necessary professional responsibility (Bishop, 1977; Center for Educational Research and Innovation, 1978).

Increased knowledge in both subject area and pedagogy, new teaching techniques, and new curricula require staff development programs. Because a staff development program is

> a way of relating learner and curricular needs to staff competencies and program development, it translates deficiencies into program objectives and focuses

> attention upon the delivery capabilities of all instructional personnel, thereby identifying the learners to be served and the staff involved. (Bishop, 1977, p. 52)

The most effective inservice activities are considered to be very personal experiences involving professionals who, as a result of their experience and training, have acquired "strong feeling, individual styles, and commitments" (Bishop, 1976, p. 9). Such programs often threaten persons who believe that any improvement effort represents criticism.

Staff development programs can be viewed as an opportunity to express one's ideas and to explore these ideas and other trends in education with colleagues (Roth, 1980). Staff development programs allow educators to keep active intellectually and to avoid stagnation. They regenerate the "thinking process in a never ending pursuit of instructional excellence" (p. 3).

Bishop (1976) and Rubin (1978a) identified three common objectives of staff development programs. First, staff development programs convey knowledge or information about new ideas and intended change, including the rationale, concepts, objectives, and strategies involved. Second, they are intended to foster the development of competencies involving a combination of information and related skills. Finally, staff development programs are intended to secure

the commitment that is necessary if knowledge is to be used correctly.

The objectives of staff development programs include enabling educators to acquire the competencies needed to implement educational improvement activities directed toward specified student needs; to improve their own or expected goals of professional development, which may or may not lead to higher levels of certification; and to meet the teachers' own goals of personal growth (Ryor, 1979, p. 14). "Educational improvement and professional development should increasingly be one and the same" (Bottoms, 1975, p. 39). The major areas of improvement due to inservice activities include knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Davis, 1974; Smith, 1985).

Otto and Erickson (1973) proposed that staff development programs can produce significant results. A staff development program can unify and motivate educators to work toward common goals, to clarify problems and suggest solutions, and to introduce and implement new ideas and procedures. "New practices need to be tested, ideas modified, and proven practices continued" (p. 6). Staff development programs which involve parents and community members can increase public support for education (p. 6).

Specific staff development programs may assist teachers in applying new insights to the learning process, provide a means of maintaining quality in the existing curriculum, and result in the assignment of priorities to the solution of

school problems (Dillon-Peterson, 1980). They provide a mechanism for responding to problems of a curricular nature, to problems of an instructional nature, or to problems in human relations. By facilitating the use of a school's resources, staff development programs may also promote significant, innovative curricular and instructional practices (Dillon-Peterson, 1980, p. 3). In this way, staff development is a process which provides for maximizing personal satisfaction and productivity--both necessary conditions for organizational growth (Dillon-Peterson, 1980). Staff development programs include the stimulation and learning opportunities that counteract boredom and lowered professional performance (Tyler, 1978), and they are also a means of facilitating the implementation of district-wide changes and goals (Wood, Thompson, & Russell, 1981).

Summarily, inservice education goals range from program restructuring and modification to exploring new programs and skills (Yarger et al., 1976). Inservice training activities are designed to improve performance in the employees' present jobs or the jobs they are being hired to do by introducing a new behavior or modifying the behavior so that a particular and specified kind of behavior results (Feiman, 1981). Staff development activities may be designed to improve the overall competencies of the employees in a specified direction beyond their present jobs (Nadler, 1970).

Participation

The number of educators involved in staff development programs is considerable (Corrigan & Howey, 1980). Nationwide, 50,000 persons serve in system level staff development positions; 100,000 principals or assistant principals, and 40,000 education professors are involved in inservice education. Approximately one inservice presenter is available for every eight teachers (p. 15). Staff development program goals are set by local district level administrators and boards of education, state legislatures and departments of education, and building administrators and teachers (Smith, 1975). The content of staff development courses is derived primarily from student needs; new knowledge, practices, procedures, and materials; required competencies; and assessed needs of individual educators (Bottoms, 1975).

The records of professional associations are evidence that staff development is important to education (Harris, 1980). The National Education Association is "clearly on record as wanting to be involved in the formulation of policies related to inservice education, and to negotiate and bargain collectively for the inservice education of teachers" (p. 32). The American Federation of Teachers has demonstrated its interest in staff development by stressing the need for teacher controlled teacher centers. The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education has been aggressive in its efforts to guide colleges of

education toward a more active role in teacher education by "sponsoring a survey of competency-based inservice education programs and a national institute for leaders in staff development" (p. 32). The policies of accrediting associations on staff development have been strengthened by making inservice education programs an essential part of the school operation. Thus, school systems are encouraged to provide educators with the opportunity, time, means, and materials for improving their professional competencies (Downs, 1977; Dreeban, 1970).

The target populations for staff development programs range from educators at the national level to educators in local school systems (Cook, 1985; Yarger et al., 1976). Staff development "has become a major activity involving the time and resources of specialists, supervisors, administrators, counselors, and parents . . ., and . . . [makes] extensive demands on school system budgets" (Fenstermacher & Berliner, 1983, p. 3). Agencies providing staff development programs include national and state governments, regional and local educational organizations, professional associations, and commercial groups. These agencies may provide for the financing of inservice activities, the content and method of inservice delivery, accreditation and certification related to inservice education, and the coordination of inservice programs (CERI, 1978). Staff development programs are considered worthwhile whenever the inservice objectives--instruction and

application--and the conditions of sensibility, variability, incentive, and maintenance are met (Fenstermacher & Berliner, 1983, pp. 16-26). Effective staff development programs are concerned with clients, organization, politics, and purposes (Arends et al., 1980, p. 21).

In order to stay current and effective, school personnel should be involved in inservice education throughout their careers (Wood et al., 1981). Significant improvements in educational practices take considerable time and are the result of a systematic, long-range inservice education program. Staff development should have an impact on the quality of the school program, and it should focus on helping the staff improve their abilities to perform their professional responsibilities. Adult learners are more likely motivated to risk learning new behaviors when they believe they have control over the learning situation and are free from threat of failure (p. 61).

Methods of Delivery

Staff development programs may focus on the district level, on the building level, or on an individual basis (Pelton, 1983). Staff development activities can include visitations; peer counseling; model teaching; travel experiences; workshop development and presentations; service on educational committees; developing, implementing or evaluating new programs; attending college courses; designing creative solutions to classroom problems;

exchanging ideas; and doing professional reading (Cooley & Thompson, 1985; Cooper, 1977; Pelton, 1983).

Wood et al. (1981) described five stages within the delivery of inservice education. The readiness stage emphasizes selection and understanding of and commitment to new professional behaviors by a school staff. The planning stage produces specific plans for inservice education programs necessary to achieve the desired changes in professional practice. The training stage involves the translation of inservice plans into practice, and the implementation stage insures that the training becomes part of the ongoing professional behavior of educators. Finally, the maintenance stage begins as new behaviors are integrated into daily practice (p. 68). This hierarchy of involvement enhances the probability that once a change in performance is operational, it will continue over time. Pankratz (1980) stated that

> purposeful inservice [education] is an essential ingredient to the adoption and institutionalization of most new programs and practices. It can be an extremely useful vehicle to manage the change process if it is carefully planned and orchestrated with the dynamics of the adopting organizations. (p. 19)

Holly (1983) described two divergent approaches to staff development. The remedial-environmental orientation places emphasis upon the environment. It sets up events and circumstances that shape teachers into more adequate,

competent people. The holistic orientation focuses on the personal dimensions of growth where each person is an agent of change. All facets of growth and development--physical, social, emotional, and cognitive--are addressed as one unit.

Staff development "may be internally proposed or externally imposed in order to effect compliance, remediate deficiencies, or enrich the knowledge and skills of individual teachers or groups of teachers who may or may not choose to participate" in staff development programs (Fenstermacher & Berliner, 1983, p. 4). The process of providing staff development activities should include determining the organizational climate and ensuring that "the school climate permits the fullest realization of staff skills and talents" (Fenstermacher & Berliner, 1983, p. 6).

Because educators vary widely in their professional competencies, readiness, and approaches to learning, professional growth requires personal and group commitment to new performance norms and organizational health, including factors such as social climate, trust, and open communication (Evertson, 1986; Rubin, 1978b). Peer support for change in practice influences the success of professional development programs. According to Rubin (1978b), school districts have the primary responsibility for providing the resources and training for a school staff to implement new programs and improve instruction.

According to Hite and Howey (1977) staff development is a political issue. Inservice plans must deal with political

variables of value difference and resource allocation (Arends et al., 1980). Even though effective staff development programs should be based upon research theory and the best educational practices, the purposes of inservice education are often the results of the political process, not an educational one. Current inservice topics arise from "political climates of communities" (p. 18). A noteworthy characteristic of current inservice education programs is their diversity and lack of coordination. Agencies responsible for inservice education programs--school districts, state departments of education, institutions of higher education--often take a win-lose stance toward each other. Each remains "more concerned about financial support, student credit hours, and political power than about a coordinated response to the needs of educators and schools" (p. 32).

Teschner and Wolter (1984) concluded that staff development should be based on several operational assumptions. Educators intrinsically want to learn, grow, and do their best; and ongoing staff growth is regarded as essential to program success. The ongoing realization of personal growth is intrinsically more important to a staff than pay and other benefits. Because learning occurs in myriad ways, both anticipated and spontaneous, program administrators can significantly enhance staff growth by proactive planning rather than a reactive problem identification and solution (p. 19).

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